Visa Relaxation to Pakistani Citizens

5044. SHRI N. DENNIS : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether relaxation is made in respect of visas issued to the Pakistanis visiting India; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE (SHRI RAMAKANT D. KHALAP) : (a) and (b) In pursuance of our policy of encouraging people-to-people contacts, Government have unilaterally eased the visa regime for Pakistani nationals. Under the liberalised policy, Government have decided to (i) permit Pakistani tourists to visit India is Groups : (ii) grant one-year multi-entry visas to Pakistani businessmen and permit them to enter and exit India either through Mumbai or Delhi if travelling by air; (iii) exempt young and elderly Pakistani visitors from police reporting; and (iv) waive visa fees for senior Pakistani citizens, cultural groups, artistes, poets, writers, students and journalists.

Hydel Power Projects

5045. SHRI AYYANNA PATRUDU : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) the salient features of the proposed new hydel power projects in the country;

(b) the response received from the private sector to set up such new power projects; and

(c) the likely rate of return for hydel power projects ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF POWER (DR. S. VENUGOPALACHARI) : (a) to (c) The private power policy enunciated by the Government in 1991 offers investment opportunities to private entrepreneurs both for thermal and hydro-electric power generation. In January, 1995, the notification No. S.O. 251 (E) issued by the Government in 1992 was amended for including calculation of tariff for sale of electricity from hydro electric power generating stations set up in the private sector. As on date, 11 proposals on the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)/ Letter of Intent (LoI), etc. route (costing more than Rs. 100 Crores) and 10 proposals on the competitive bidding route (costing more than Rs. 1000 crores) have been received for setting up Hydro-electric power projects in the private sector. The likely rate of return from these projects can be determined only after the promoters obtain the requisite statutory and other clearances and achieve financial closure.

Execution of Contracts

5046. DR. ASIM BALA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have observed any irregularities in execution of contracts for production of Oil and Gas by private parties during the last three years;

(b) if so, the details thereof, and

(c) the action taken by the Government thereon ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI T.R. BAALU) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Revenue through Custom Duty

5047. SHRI SUDHIR GIRI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the total amount of revenue collected through additional customs duty on all imported items in 1996-97; and

(b) the estimated amount likely to be collected on this account during the next financial year ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) Revenue realised through additional customs duty in 1996-97 is not readily available. Requisite information is being collected.

(b) Revenue from additional customs duty for 1997-98 has not been estimated separately.

National Sample Survey Organisation

5048. SHRI SYDAIAH KOTA : Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state :

(a) whether job opportunities declined after liberalisation as per survey carried out by the National Sample Survey Organisation;

(b) whether change had an adverse effect on the interests of women as it could give her only short term employment instead of permanent employment;

(c) whether the number of job seeking women had gone up during the period; and

(d) if so, the steps proposed to solve their employment problems ?

THE MINISTER OF LABOUR (SHRI M. ARUNACHALAM) : (a) to (d) Information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Misuse of Gold Import Scheme

5049. SHRI AJMEERA CHANDULAL : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the scheme of import of gold by NRI's is being grossly misused and payments through Hawala Channels are made for the legal gold; and

(b) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to put a check on this malpractice ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR) : (a) and (b) The Government have no information of gross misuse of the scheme though intelligence reports suggest some payment are made through illicit channels. However the main objectives of the liberalised gold Import Scheme, *inter alia*, are to